

Foreword to the EEGSA-SEGSA Conference proceeding: Remote connections

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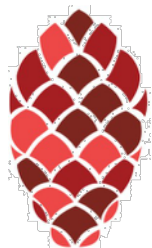
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The 13th Annual Graduate Research Showcase was held by the Department of Secondary and Elementary Education Graduate Students' Associations on May 1, 2021. As our first virtual research showcase, graduate student presenters and participants gathered in virtual spaces to celebrate and share our research, and engage in conversation with colleagues. We appreciate and are grateful for the opportunity provided by the Alberta Academic Review to publish a special issue to present the conference proceedings.

Our showcase theme, "remote connections," is an oxymoron, and it is significant for a number of different reasons.

First, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented us from gathering together face-to-face and on campus to share graduate student research and celebrate our collective and individual work. However, through the miracle of digital technology, we were able to connect remotely. The design of our showcase was a bit unconventional, but the hybrid synchronous/asynchronous design allowed for the sharing and participation of our graduate students at the University of Alberta who are currently residing in locations around the world. Furthermore, this showcase was entirely coordinated through digital and remote means. Darcy, Kimberly, and Yina as a team, have not yet met face-to-face!

Besides the functionality and design of the showcase itself, "remote connections" also represented the creativity to think differently, and the resiliency to stick with something despite a lack of an obvious or immediate reward. Over the past 15 months, the pandemic has forced many graduate students to think differently about their lives or to think differently about their research. For some, this might have meant a complete rewrite of an ethics proposal to shift to virtual data collection, yet for others, it might have meant an entire re-imagining of a query-- an opening of a possibility or an opportunity to ask a different question. In terms of creating and hosting this showcase, remote connections also represent a venture into the relative unknown. Never have the organizers planned a virtual conference before; much of our experience in planning has required a quick study in unfamiliar skills and knowledge-- "building the plane as we fly it," so to speak. We hope this conference challenged graduate students' creativity and sparked their imaginations as they engage with their colleagues' presentations.

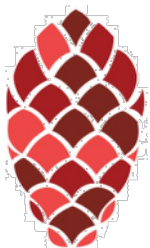


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Finally, remote connections celebrate the diversity of graduate student research in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. We designed this showcase as both an opportunity to share emerging scholarly research with others, and we embedded time within the showcase program to actively engage with other's papers and presentations. At times, this was challenging, as perhaps the research with which participants were asked to engage was quite different from their own research questions. We challenged participants to lean into the spirit of remote connections, and use the breakout room discussions as an opportunity to co-compose knowledge and connections to each other and your respective research questions.

As keynote speakers, Dr. Hayley Morrison, an assistant professor at Department of Elementary Education shared her experiences as a graduate student at University of Alberta and her transition from a graduate student to a faculty member. Dr. Gregory Thomas, a professor from the Department of Secondary Education, shared valuable insights on the publication process and offered some advice on how graduate students might prepare their course papers and research findings for publication.

This special issue presents the abstracts of the showcase presenters, as they share their research as it exists in various stages: from works near completion, to works in progress, to their own "remote connections"-- ideas they have been working with. Insights across diverse topics across education including language and literacy, physical education, research methodologies, Indigenous education, and many others presented here, reflect the wide diversity of innovative and imaginative graduate student research in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta as it has emerged amidst these challenging times.



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